



The Castle of Caprigliola

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Location: Caprigliola stands on a 164m high hill, at the edge of the Apuan Alps, on the left bank of River Magra

Type of castle: Basic structure with tower and episcopal palace.

Construction period: The castle dates back to the 13th Century, whereas the cylindrical tower was built short before.

First appearance in historical sources: The village is mentioned in documents dating from 1055.

Strategic role: The castle was used by the Bishop of Luni to control the territorial expansions of the Malaspina and, later on, the Genoese.

Further in use: At the end of the Middle Ages, the structures were no longer used as a residence and the medieval fortresses were circled by the defensive walls, built during the Renaissance by Cosimo I.

Current condition: There are remains of the walls, the circular tower and the basic





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structure dating back to the 13th Century. There are also remains of the eastern church's wall and the palace's entrances.

Viewing: The remains of the basic structure can't be visited, whilst the tower – which has been turned into a bell tower – can be visited subject to permission by the vicar.

History: In the Middle Ages, Caprigliola was an important castle belonging to the Bishop of Luni. It is certified that in 1185, Frederick Barbarossa was assigned as fief and 'castrum de Capriola cum corte et pertinenti et piscatione' by the Bishop of Luni. This statute was then renewed in 1191.

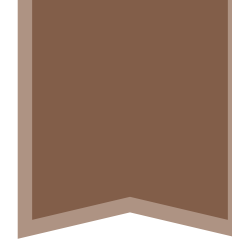
Between the 12th and the 13th Centuries, the village was frequented by bishops. Some of them stayed inside a palace, which has been mentioned in texts from 1235. During the 13th Century, Caprigliola belonged to the Bishop, who constructed a cylindrical tower and a building, designed by Enrico da Fucecchio.

The conflict between the bishops and the Malaspina between 1280 and 1281 ended with the defeat of the Malaspina in Caprigliola. At the end of the 13th Century, the religious powers submitted to the Malaspina, whose control of the area was opposed and then defeated by Castruccio Castracani – Lord of Lucca and of a part of the Magra valley – at the beginning of the 14th Century. Caprigliola was conquered by Castruccio in 1316, but after his death

the fiefdom returned to the Malaspina, most likely to Spinetta. In 1404 Caprigliola gave up control to the Florentine Republic, following the wishes of the inhabitants. Caprigliola and Albiano held a great strategic value for Florence, from where it was possible to control the Genoese expansion into the Magra Valley during of the 15th Century. Florence allowed the inhabitants fiscal benefits in order to maintain their loyalty.

The strategic position of the village meant Cosimo de Medici built a bastioned defensive wall system in 1558.

Caprigliola remained under the rule of Florence until 1848, when the fiefdom, as well as Albiano and other territories, were handed over to the Grand Duchy of Modena



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Structure: There is evidence of medieval episcopal structures belonging to the castle. Inside the castle there are remains of the structure and of the 13th Century cylindrical tower, as well as evidence of the Bishop's palace. The structures follow the same axis, on top of the hill. The rectangular structure built by Enrico da Fucecchio is made of sand-lime bricks. The structure was originally taller than it is nowadays, and it is covered with a brick barrel vault, which was built later. The tower was built, however, in squared lime-stone. Its basement was directly built on the rocks. The tower's entrance was originally at 7m above ground, possibly reached by means of a wooden staircase or via a walkway surrounding the tower. The tower was restored in the 18th century, when the episcopal palace was transformed into the church of San Niccolò. A belfry was added, but this did not alter the aesthetic appeal of the construction. This is the only structure in Lunigiana where the hanging brick arches of the tower can still be seen.